

Application/Control Number: 10/172,840  
Art Unit: 2872

17. (once amended) An optical apparatus for selectively transmitting optical signals comprising:

a first port to receive first optical signals;

a second port to receive second optical signals; and

a means for selectively manipulating said first and second optical signals,

said means having a controllable optical state such that said second optical signals are not transmitted from said second port to said first port unless said means is in a first controlled optical state, said means being configured to transmit said first optical signals from said first port to said second port regardless of said optical state of said optical component, said means including an electrically controllable birefringent device that is configured to substantially function as a wave plate when said means is switched to said first controlled optical state.

18. (canceled)

19. (once amended) The optical apparatus of claim <sup>17</sup>~~18~~ wherein said electrically controllable birefringent device includes a liquid crystal cell. <sup>^</sup>

20. (canceled)